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Who's Leading the Republican Party: Rush Limbaugh and the Resurrection of "Massive Resistance" Between the Lines

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The Republican Party put all its business in the streets this past week as talk radio rhetorician, Rush Limbaugh, went on the offensive (even more than he's been on the offensive since Obama has taken office) at the Conservative Party Convention this past weekend. Stating that he wanted to see President Obama fail, and that it is reasonable to want a government to fail that is not based on capitalism and individual rights, Limbaugh took on pop culture populism of Obama with an old brand of cultural populism.

Let's ignore the codified language and ideological spin (just for a second) that has nothing to do with the real purpose of this incendiary speech. Protest and opposition speech is tolerated in our country. What is not tolerated is talk that undermines the government. That is called sedition, which is defined by *Webster's Dictionary* as "the causing of discontent, insurrection, or resistance against a government." Limbaugh essentially said, literally and in his own words, that "We need to take 'our country' back" as if the government and the nation that President Obama is leading is, somehow, not America (or American enough, more code language). Obama could have him arrested for sedition, as Lincoln had many arrested during the Civil War for advocating against the government, but that would make Limbaugh more of an ideological martyr than he already is so it is best for Obama to just ignore him.

"Mount Rushmouth" got so carried away Saturday that not even his own party could ignore him. Our new brother from another political mother, Michael Steele, tried to put a cap on it, apologizing for Limbaugh and asserting himself as the head of the party. Rush blew him off too, saying "why is he the head of the Republican Party?" Suggesting

that Steele should be defending his rhetoric. Limbaugh even suggested that "if he was the head of a party" in such dire straits, he would resign - of course, an attempt to bait Steele but jab the party's new suntanned leadership. The party's new color complex is most troublesome for Limbaugh who re-invented a whole new code language so the party could signal race talk without mentioning race. But Michael Steele knew exactly what he was saying. He was inspiring Americans to resist against the Obama administration, which has spent the first six weeks in office cleaning up elephant poop. This has all the markings of massive resistance, which we've seen before but thought was gone.

Limbaugh is an opinion leader with millions of listeners, but he is not a government leader. He has a popular following but he is a citizen first, then he is a talk show host with a voice but that voice can never be used to undermine the government. He doesn't have unlimited license to break the law. The First Amendment doesn't cover sedition and others forms of "Popular Tyranny." Populous leaders that started or reinforced cultural movements as "popular sentiment" created serious dilemmas for the government.

Most of the time, Presidents had seditionists arrested. Besides the obvious with the Civil War, the most significant advocating of law-breaking was the Massive Resistance of the Post-*Brown* decision, from 1955 to 1965. The second largest cultural resistance movement in American history, government and civic leaders, lead by U.S. Senators, Newspaper Publishers and business people (capitalist) said "NO" to *Brown* and desegregation for ten years after *Brown* was law because "popular" cultural voices advocated for the South to resist until Congress passed a law outlawing de jure segregation.

After the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, people thought massive racial resistance was over. It just went underground a couple decades and took a new form resurfacing in the 1990s under "ideological resistance." It's still governing by popular cultural practices for the most part. Strip the government of money, and you can't address social inequality, which was largely racial then but is class based now.

Still, you now have Republicans, lead by Limbaugh - who calls himself the "de facto" leader of the party. "De facto" segregation is practiced in America today. It means "separation by social norms and residential patterns." Even challenging his own elected leader of the party, signaling to the world that the party was just caught up in an "Obama moment" of change when they elected Steele chairman but the rank and file of the party "didn't drink the Kool-Aid" and is with "the voice" of the party. It's a strange dance the Republican Party is doing, right now. But it's one we've seen before.

Limbaugh is trying to inspire a resistance movement that he knows exists, but most of America had simply forgot about. Massive resistance hasn't gone anywhere. They just needed a reason to resist, and a voice to call for it. The call has sounded and there are still some willing to follow. He knows this, which is why he's taken it to the level of sedition, while asking the question, "Whose country is this anyway?" Rush Limbaugh isn't as dumb as he looks.


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